STRUCTURED LIBERAL EDUCATION

SYLLABUS

WINTER QUARTER 1975-76

COURSE TITLE: SLE SEMINAR
DEPARTMENT CODE: 999
COURSE NUMBER: 92
UNITS: 9
Loren Bloch  
Tutor  
Room 201  
Loro  

Richard Brody  
Political Science  
Inst. of Political Studies  
497-4173  

Bernie Cohen  
Sociology  
497-3958  

Gregson Davis  
Classics  
497-2948  

Jim Dunlap  
Lecturer and Tutor  
San Francisco  
771-7511  

Terry Ehret  
Tutor  
Faisan  
Room 303  

Patrick Flannery  
Lecturer and Tutor  
Classics  
497-4658  

Helene Foley  
Classics  
497-3682  

John Goheen  
Philosophy and Ombudsman  
Bldg. 80, Room 85  
497-3682  

Chris Gutierrez  
Tutor  
Gavilan  
Room 303  

Jonathan Horton  
Tutor  
Paloma  
Room 201  

Ron Jepperson  
Lecturer and Tutor  
Mirlo  
Room 116  

Kurt Koehler  
Tutor  
Alondra  
Room 102  

Bill Larkins  
Tutor  
Faisan  
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Kathy Luciano  
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REQUIRED TEXTS


Shakespeare, *King Lear*, New York, Signet

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, New York, Signet
SLE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Due Monday, January 26 at 5:00 p.m. (Week IV)

   TOPIC: Compare More's Utopia with Plato's Republic as exercises in utopian thought. What are the differences in the ways the authors conceive of constructing a utopia, and how are these differences reflected in their actual designs? If you wish, you may write a dialogue in which the speakers criticize each other's ideal commonwealth and defend the superiority of their own. If you write a dialogue, be sure that the format of the dialogue does not detract from the serious presentation of your ideas.

   (6-8 pages)

2. Due Tuesday, February 17 at 5:00 p.m. (Week VII).

   TOPIC: Compare King Lear with a Greek tragedy you read for SLE last quarter. Explain some of the principal differences both in structure and in content in the two tragedies. Does tragedy have any constant characteristics? If you wish, you can consult Aristotle's Poetics, but this is not required.

   (6-8 pages)

3. Due Monday, March 8 at 5:00 p.m. (Week X).

   TOPIC: Some writers have argued that there are radical differences between Galileo and Aristotle in their approaches to the study of motion. Others insist that there are important continuities between the two. Critically analyze the two positions, supporting your analysis with material from both Aristotle's and Galileo's works. What are the implications of the continuity-discontinuity argument for an understanding of science?

   (6-8 pages)

FINAL EXAM

A take-home, final exam will be due in the Flo Mo Office by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17. The nature of this exam will be explained later in the quarter.
TOpIC: The Synthesis of Christianity and Aristotle

TOpIC QUESTIONS:

I. In what sense can theology be called a "science?"

II. Is revelation a source of knowledge?

How is myth related to religion? to revelation?

IV. What is the relation of natural, human knowledge to religious "truths?"

V. Does one have to presuppose religious doctrine to claim that the soul is immortal?

VI. Do human laws derive their authority from a theological source? Is this what is meant by the assertion, "we hold these truths to be self-evident ...?"

How would you interpret Pascal's remark that man is "half ape, half angel" in the light of this Thomistic synthesis?

VIII. Is Aquinas' use of Aristotle faithful to Aristotle's own philosophy? Why doesn't Aquinas use Plato?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: John Goheen

Tue 3:15 Plenary Session -- John Goheen
7:00 Plenary Session -- "Romanitas et Christianitas," Professor A. Raubitschek

Wed 3:15 Plenary Session -- "Urban Culture of the Middle Ages: Secularism and Empiricism," Professor A. Bernstein

Thu 3:15 Discussion Sections

REQUIRED READING:

Aquinas, Summa Theologica, in Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas, Part I, Question 1, articles 1-8; Part I, Question 75; Parts I-II, Questions 90-91.
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

Part I, Question 1, articles 1-8

I. What is "revelation?" Is it incompatible with human knowledge? Would Plato or Aristotle have made any distinction between knowledge of "this world" and of some "world beyond?"

If, according to Aquinas, a "knowledge of divine things" constitutes wisdom, was Plato wise? was Aristotle? If Greek philosophers held no such knowledge, why would St. Thomas cite their arguments so frequently in his own theological discussions?

III. How do you interpret the following passage?

"If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by argument, but only of answering his objections -- if he has any -- against faith. Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the proofs brought against faith are not demonstrations, but arguments that can be answered."

Part I, Question 75

I. What is a "soul?" Is it independent of body -- that is, can it exist alone? If so, why do men need physical bodies? If not, how can we speak of "souls" and "spiritual things" in any meaningful way?

The "intellect naturally desires always to exist. But a natural desire cannot be in vain. Therefore, every intellectual substance is incorruptible." Is this a good argument to prove that the soul is immortal? Is this a logically sound argument?

Parts I-II, Questions 90-91

I. Aquinas states that "happiness" is the proper end of man. What is "happiness?" Is it merely physical pleasure, or is it some form of intellectual excellence? Is it attainable by men in groups? If not, why does Aquinas speak of a "common good?"

Does Aquinas draw a clear distinction between "eternal law" and "natural law?" Would the Pre-Socratic philosophers have drawn a similar distinction? would Plato or Aristotle? If "eternal law" is valid for all individuals and peoples, why do men also need "human laws?"
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS (cont.):

III. How are men and beasts distinguished from each other: by their reaction to sensual pleasure, or by other criteria as well?
TOPIC: The Secular World of the Renaissance

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. Is it possible to write objective history? Is there an implicit theoretical perspective in any work of history? How do you look for it? How do you tell good history from bad?

Is history continuous, or does it have sharp breaks? What is the right way to divide time into historical periods? Does a concept like "The Renaissance" have any usefulness if it doesn't begin or end at a certain time? Does history go in a certain direction? Is it circular? Is it meaningful?

III. What is the relationship between social, economic, political, intellectual, and religious factors in history? Is it possible to tell them apart? Are any of them more important than the others? If you choose one of them to be primary, what consequences follow from that choice? For example, would a belief in the primacy of economic factors lead to any particular philosophy of history?

How does a work of history reflect the times in which it was written? Does each generation have to rewrite its own history? Is later, that is, more recent, history usually better and more objective? What examples of the rewriting of history are you aware of? How might later historians rewrite the history of our own time?

V. What does the phrase "Renaissance man" mean to historians and humanists today? What does it mean to you? Can a person live a "Renaissance life" in our modern world?

How were Renaissance "states" different from our modern nations? In what way might life in such states have influenced the thoughts of Renaissance philosophers, playwrights, and poets? Do historical differences make it difficult for us to understand the life in Renaissance societies?

VII. What is, or was, a "court?" How did life at court differ from life in modern governmental seats of power (Washington, D.C. or Moscow, for example)? In what ways would life at court have resembled our own lives at Stanford University?
PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Michael Saffle and Jon Reider

3:15 Plenary Session -- Michael Saffle (Castiglione)
7:00 Plenary Session -- Jon Reider (Burckhardt)

3:15 Discussion Sections
7:00 Plenary Session -- Jim Dunlap (Renaissance art)

3:15 Discussion Sections
7:00 Film: "Man--The Measure of All Things"

REQUIRED READING:

Burckhardt, Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy,
258-268, 272-283, 302-321, 345-385. (Read Burckhardt
over the Christmas break.)

Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, Books I, II, IV.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

CASTIGLIONE

I. Castiglione believes the idea of an "ideal" Courtier
important enough to write a book about it. Why? Could
a modern author publish a similar book today?

II. Why does Castiglione turn what might otherwise have been
a didactic manual on manners into an entertaining dialogue?
Why does he set that dialogue in Urbino, and people it
with such varied characters? What would Plato or Aeschylus
think of Castiglione's skills as a philosopher and
dramatist?

III. What is sprezzatura? Why is it one of the most important
concepts in The Book of the Courtier? How is the Courtier
guided by sprezzatura in his actions at court? at games?
in intellectual discussions? in battle?

IV. Should the Courtier be of noble birth? Why? What would
Plato or Aristotle have thought of such class distinctions?

V. Which intellectual skills should the Courtier possess?
which social skills? Is the ideal Courtier first and
foremost to be a man of peace, or of war?
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS (cont.)

VI. What role do princes play in Castiglione's social scheme? Would Plato have approved of such "benevolent" rulers? Would he, indeed, have found them "benevolent" at all?

Is physical beauty or spiritual beauty more important to a Courtier?

VIII. What role does love play in the daily affairs of the Courtier? What forms of affection and allegiance does the Courtier owe to his lord? his mistress? the "common" people?

What four steps on Bembo's "ladder of love" lead the Courtier from concern with mundane affairs to an understanding of something Divine? Would Plato have recognized any of his ideas in Bembo's discourse? Would Aquinas have found such "spiritual exercises" logical and laudable? would St. Ignatius?

X. Does The Book of the Courtier end convincingly? Are you convinced an Ideal Courtier would do all the things Castiglione's characters agree he would do? Why?

BURCKHARDT

I. What kind of history is Burckhardt writing? What kinds of questions is he trying to answer? What is his method of doing history? How does it differ from more conventional history, such as a textbook?

What does he see as the defining characteristics of the Renaissance? Why do you think he picked these particular characteristics? How does the Renaissance compare to the middle ages in his view? Is one period "better" in some way than the other?

III. How does he describe the relationship between the Renaissance and his own time, the middle of the 19th Century? Is there a sharp break between the two, or is history fairly continuous since the Renaissance, according to him? What trends in his own time might have influenced the development of his ideas of the Renaissance?

IV. Can you tell if he has a conscious philosophy of history? Does he think that history has a purpose or a direction? Does this affect his view of the Renaissance at all?

V. How else could you interpret the Renaissance? How would you interpret it if you were a devout Catholic? or a Marxist? or if you believed that the modern world were a dehumanized, totalitarian, technological nightmare? What is there about Burckhardt's interpretation that has made it so popular?
WEEK III: 19 to 23 January

TOPIC: Humanist Criticism of Society and Man

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. What is a utopia? How does it differ from political criticism? What social or political conditions might inspire the writing of utopian works? What would happen if a utopian writer achieved power?

How seriously should you take a utopian work? If a writer really wanted to change conditions, wouldn't practical recommendations for the reform of specific abuses be more effective? Compare utopia and myth as forms of thought.

III. How does the humanism of More and Rabelais compare to the 5th Century Greek humanism of Sophocles or Socrates? to our own? How realistically do they judge man's positive and negative characteristics? Does utopian thought require a positive view of human nature?

IV. What are the differences and similarities between the northern Renaissance and Burckhardt's picture of Renaissance Italy? Would Castiglione's ideal courtier have been comfortable in More's England or Rabelais' France?

V. What is the attitude of humanism toward religion? Could the humanists reconcile a belief in God with a belief in man? Can you?

How do More and Rabelais reflect classical thought? What Greek writers seem to have been the most important for them? Which were ignored? Why? Do these same writers have the same influence in our own day? Why?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Gerald Gillespie

Tue 3:15 Plenary Session -- Gerald Gillespie

Wed 3:15 Discussion Sections
    7:00 Plenary Sessions -- Michael Saffle (Renaissance Music)

Thu 3:15 Discussion Sections
REQUIRED READING:

More, Utopia

Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

MORE

I. How is Utopia a criticism of European society in More's time? Aside from other sources, what evidence from the text itself supports this? How could a man as important as More make such criticisms?

II. Is More's criticism of economic practices, like enclosures, humane and reasonable, or is it pointless, since such economic changes were inevitable? Would a modern socialist approve of Utopia? Would a modern capitalist disapprove of it?

III. Is Utopia a vindication of man's "natural reason?" To what extent does More agree with Thomas Aquinas on man's capacity for reason?

IV. Does utopian society maximize human pleasure? How might our own idea of pleasure differ from More's? Why does More's utopia contain unpleasant features like war and punishment? Would you like to live there?

V. What is the significance of the internal structure of the book? Does the argument shift at any point? Why does More put the description of utopia in Raphael's mouth, rather than his own? Does More want to dissociate himself from his own ideas?

VI. What does More think is the most serious of man's weaknesses? How does his utopia reflect this? What does this tell us about his attitude toward Christianity? How important is religion in Utopia?

RABELAIS

I. What philosophical ideas do More and Rabelais have in common? What differences are there? How are these differences expressed in their two visions of ideal societies? Why does Rabelais set his in an abbey?
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS (cont.)

What is Rabelais' attitude toward traditional education? What would he consider a well-educated man? Do the Greek and Roman classics have a value for him? How does this compare with the idea that the Renaissance was a "rebirth" of the classics?

III. Is Rabelais a humanist? Why then does he write about giants instead of ordinary men? What is the effect of his use of grotesque exaggeration? Why is he so interested in the cruder aspects of human activity?

Do Rabelais' characters have any morality? Is "Do what you will" a viable moral code? Is the rest of the book consistent in its assumptions with the ideals of the Abbey of Theleme?

V. What is Rabelais' attitude toward religion? Why is he so critical of monks? Are his ideas consistent with St. Thomas' ideas?

VI. What is the structure of Rabelais' work? Why the short, unconnected series of episodes? How does this affect the meaning? Is there any thread that links it all together? What is the effect of alternating humorous scenes with relatively serious ones? What kind of humor is this?
WEEK IV: 26 to 30 January

TOPIC: Pragmatic Political Thought: Politics versus Ethics

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. Is it possible to study politics scientifically? How would you go about it? What are some of the ways to minimize personal bias?

Do all states, or political systems, follow certain rules of political behavior? Are examples drawn from past societies useful in comparison with our own times?

III. Is politics an amoral or immoral activity? Is it possible to be an effective politician and a morally good person at the same time? Does politics contribute to the general welfare, or is it just a struggle for power?

What is the role of violence in politics? Is it always bad? Can evil means be used to achieve good ends? Do governments have a right to use violence when citizens do not?

V. Why do some kinds of governments tend to be unstable? Are democratic ones more stable than undemocratic ones? What social conditions promote popular governments?

VI. Is there any difference between politics within a state and politics between states? Are the rules for survival the same?

VII. Is there a fixed human nature? Does the study of politics depend on the idea of some kind of human nature? Is it fair to reason from examples of political action to principles of human nature?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Jon Reider

Mon 5:00 Papers Due

Tue 3:15 Plenary Session -- Jon Reider
7:00 Plenary Session -- "The Social Structure of Florence," Professor Zelditch

Wed 3:15 Discussion Sections
7:00 Dramatic reading of Mandragola

Thu 3:15 Discussion Sections
WEEK IV (cont.)

REQUIRED READING:

Machiavelli, The Prince.

Mandragola

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

I. Has Machiavelli broken with the political thought of St. Thomas? of Plato? of Aristotle? What would he think of Thrasyaeus' arguments in Republic, Book I?

How do you explain the apparent contradiction between the autocratic values of The Prince and the republicanism of The Discourses, keeping in mind that they were both written at about the same time?

Is Machiavelli's advice to the Prince cruel and immoral or is it coldly realistic? Is his distinction between "good" cruelty and "bad" cruelty valid? Do you think his advice is good advice for the most part?

Does Machiavelli have any idea of "justice?" How does he decide what is right and wrong? Is success or failure all that matters to him?

How "scientific" is Machiavelli's approach to the study of politics? Is it fair to call him the first political scientist? Is he more or less scientific than Aristotle? Do any of his biases show?

How is Machiavelli a Renaissance man? Why is he more influenced by Roman history than by Greek philosophy? Does he derive his classification of the types of states from Aristotle? Are there any similarities between Castiglione's Courtier and the Prince?

How do you explain the last chapter of The Prince? Is the utopian nationalism there consistent with his cynical advice elsewhere in the book?

VIII. What is Machiavelli's attitude toward religion? Are his reasons justified? What kind of religion has value for him? How does this compare to Rabelais?
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS (cont.)

IX. Does the Prince have any heroic characteristics? How does he differ from earlier conceptions of the hero in Greek literature and drama? How do the concepts of fortuna and virtu fit into Machiavelli's idea of heroic action?

X. What kind of liberty does Machiavelli believe in? Is it a quality that only states have, or can individuals be free as well? Is it more important than political stability or the degree of democracy in a state?

XI. What makes The Prince such a controversial book? If it was valid for his times, is it also valid for our own? Would you like to be a Prince?

XII. How does Mandragola reflect some of the ideas of The Prince, even though it is not about politics? Is it possible that The Prince is a satire as well? What evidence would support this idea?
WEEK V: 2 to 6 February

TOPIC: New Systems for Old

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. Is scientific knowledge different from other kinds of knowledge?

II. Is the process of acquiring and evaluating scientific knowledge different from the process of acquiring and evaluating other kinds of human knowledge?

Is there a "scientific method?"

IV. Does the lay public have any role to play in science? What is the relation of science to other institutions of society?

V. Is there any necessary conflict between science and religion?

VI. What traditional views were at stake in the controversy over the position of the earth in the solar system?

To what extent does knowledge depend on "sensibility?" Which system, the Ptolemaic or the Copernican, is more "sensible?"

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Bernie Cohen and Mason Yearian

Tue 3:15  Plenary Session -- Mason Yearian (laws of falling bodies)
4:15  Plenary Session -- Bernie Cohen (Galileo and the Church)

Wed 3:15  Plenary Session -- Mason Yearian (lecture and demonstration in the Physics Tank)
7:00

Thu 3:15  Discussion Sections
4:15  Cohen

REQUIRED READING:

Geymonat, Galileo Galilei


Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution, Chs. I-V.
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

I. What was the significance of the law of freely falling bodies in relation to traditional views and for the future of physics?

What is characteristic of Galileo's reply to the argument that the moon couldn't possibly have mountains?
How might telescopic evidence be denied?

III. Why did Galileo turn to "cultural politics?" Can science exist independent of politics?

IV. How did Galileo reconcile Copernicanism and dogma?

V. Does the trial of Galileo have elements reminiscent of Socrates'?

VI. What is the importance of Galileo's distinction between objective and subjective qualities?

What is the significance of the Church's warning that it is permissible to teach the Copernican system as a convenient computational device but not as fact?

VIII. What is the "Galilean principle of relativity?"

Was Galileo's confession sincere, in light of the contents of his Dialogues Concerning the Two Chief World Systems?

X. What did Galileo mean by "interrogating nature?"
WEEK VI: 9 to 13 February

**TOPIC:** In a Decentered Universe, Where Does Man Find Security?

**TOPIC QUESTIONS:**

I. Is Aristotle's conception of tragedy applicable to King Lear? What, then, do we mean by the word when we call Oedipus and Lear both tragedy?

II. What is the difference between tragedy and comedy, according to Shakespeare? How is this different from Aristotle?

III. To what would you attribute "greatness" in literature? in Homer? in Aeschylus? in Shakespeare?

IV. Is there a Greek sense of fate in Shakespeare's plays? Are there also Christian elements?

V. How would Shakespeare have us respond to the suffering and weakness of mankind?

VI. Why didn't the Italian Renaissance, with its great accomplishments in art, produce a Shakespeare?

**PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:**

**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Jim Dunlap

3:15 Plenary Session -- Jim Dunlap
7:00 Plenary Session -- Professor Rebholz (Lear)

3:15 Discussion Sections
7:00 Film: "King Lear"

3:15 Discussion Sections
7:00 Film: "The Tempest"

**REQUIRED READING:**

Shakespeare, *King Lear*

, *The Tempest*
TEXTUAL QUESTIONS (cont.):

KING LEAR

I. What is the contribution of the sub-plots of Gloucester, Edmund, and Edgar to the total effect of Lear?

II. How are conditions in the world, in the state, and in the individual related to one another in the course of the play? How is Lear a "microcosm"?

What evidence is there that action in the play violates Shakespeare's understanding of "natural law?" Consider the relations of men (and women) to one another, to the state, and to the gods. What is the role of the fool in this presentation of the "upsetting of order?"

IV. What are the most striking reversals in Act III of Lear?

V. One critic writes of Lear's last words, "In his own mind she lives, and it is the discovery that Cordelia is alive, that life is the reality under the appearance, that the reality is good -- it is this that breaks his heart at last." Would you attack or defend the thesis that Lear ends with unbearable joy?

VI. Could Machiavelli have used any of the content of Lear in his assumptions concerning human nature? Concerning political power? Do you suppose that the general effects of the Copernican revolution would attack or defend the vision in Lear? Why?

THE TEMPEST

I. In Act I, Scene 1, how are the relationships among the characters defined? Who professes power? Who is in visible control? Which authority appears the more "rational?"

What is Caliban's attitude toward nourishment, work, and sexual promiscuity? What is Ariel's? How do they describe pleasure and freedom? How would their utopian dreams differ from that of Gonzalo?

III. In his actions and in his advice, how does Gonzalo display considerate behavior in Act I, Scene 1 and Act II, Scene 1? Is this behavior political, too? Would Gonzalo make a good Courtier?

IV. What relative value does Prospero attach to his learning at the beginning of the play? How does he feel at the end? What has effected the change?

V. Is there a reflection in The Tempest of a world which might be, as opposed to a world which is?
WEEK VII: 16 to 20 February

TOPIC: The Search for Certainty and Order

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. In a world which has lost a basic theological orientation and organization, where can man look for a new order?

II. What is the relation between the new science and nature? Does one approach nature through experience? through previously conceived theories? What is the relation between science and technology?

Is there hope for the reorganization of society in the age of scientific knowledge?

IV. Does the development of science justify an optimism for man? Is an optimistic view necessary for the development of science?

V. What is the relation between the individual observer or scientist and nature? Is nature neutral with respect to man?

Granted scientific knowledge and its application to control of nature by man, is there any place left for religion?

VII. Is there, in addition to "objective," scientific knowledge, some other kind(s) of knowledge?

VIII. What is the problem of induction?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Bernie Cohen and John Goheen

Mon 5:00 Papers Due

Tue 3:15 Plenary Session -- Bernie Cohen (Bacon) 4:15 Plenary Session -- John Goheen (Descartes)

Wed 3:15 Discussion Sections

Thu 3:15 Plenary Session -- Mason Yearian (Brahe and Kepler) 4:15 Discussion Sections
WEEK VII (cont.)

REQUIRED READING:

Bacon, The New Atlantis, copied selections.
Descartes, Meditations, I and II, in Philosophical Essays.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

BACON

I. What is Bacon's purpose in writing a utopian work?
   What aspect of science does Bacon think has been neglected?

III. What is Bacon's view of the real and legitimate goal of science? Is his view justifiable?

IV. What type of institution does "Solomon's House" foreshadow?

V. Is the New Atlantis an equalitarian society? Can science be equalitarian?
   What in the description of "Solomon's House" throws light on the science of Bacon's own times? On what he sees as possible?

DESCARTES

I. What are the sources of doubt, according to Descartes?

II. Where does Descartes find the examples of what does seem true?

III. How can Descartes doubt the truths of mathematics?

IV. Where does Descartes find an indubitable truth? Why?

V. What is the status of our knowledge of the physical world once the truth, "I think, therefore, I exist," has been found?
   How do you interpret the example of the wax?

VII. Has scepticism with regard to knowledge been finally answered by Descartes?
WEEK VIII: 23 to 27 February

TOPIC: The Triumph of Science: The Newtonian World

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. What is the accomplishment of Newton in relation to scientific ideas already established by such scientists as Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler?

II. Would Hobbes have rejoiced at Newton's science of motion? Why?

III. What was the significance of Newton's discovery of the calculus?

IV. Once physical science is established, where is man? society? literature? art? God?

V. Why was the notion of "action at a distance" so revolutionary (in reference, for example, to Aristotelian physics)?

VI. What are your reactions to Pope's famous lines:

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in the night.
God said, "Let Newton be," and all was light.

VII. Hume, a great admirer of Newton, said: "While Newton seemed to draw off the veil from some of the mysteries of nature, he showed at the same time the imperfections of mechanical philosophy; and thereby restored her ultimate secrets to the obscurity in which they ever did and ever will remain." How would you interpret this remark?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Bernie Cohen and Mason Yearian

3:15 Plenary Session -- Mason Yearian (Newton's Laws of Motion)
4:15 Plenary Session -- Bernie Cohen (the Royal Society)

Wed 3:15 Plenary Session -- Mason Yearian (laws of gravitation and Kepler's laws of planetary motion)
7:00 Plenary Session -- Bernie Cohen (Newton's impact)

3 Discussion Sections
WEEK VIII (cont.)

REQUIRED READING:

- Hall, Scientific Revolution, 1500-1800, Chs. 6-9.
- Newton, Principia, copied selections.
- March, Physics for Poets, copied selections.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

NEWTON

I. What does Newton mean by "principle?" Does one start science from assumed principles? from experience?

What is the importance of Newton's distinction between "absolute" time and space, as opposed to "apparent" time and space?

How does the law of gravity unify physics and astronomy?
WEEK IX: 1 to 5 March

TOPIC: The Reconstruction of Politics: A Rationalistic and Materialistic Approach

TOPIC QUESTIONS:

I. What model of scientific explanation should the study of political behavior follow? What kind of method should it use?

II. What assumptions about human action must a "rationalist" approach to politics make? Must it assume that man is rational? that man is good?

Do natural laws have moral values? Can individual desire be seen as a natural law? How does this compare to Aristotle's or Aquinas' definitions of natural law?

IV. What is the place of religion in a scientific theory of man and society?

V. What are the implications of the idea of a "social contract" as the source of government? Is this a new idea? What social trends might lead to the generation of such an idea? Can you break a social contract?

How does "natural law" differ from "natural right?"

What is the attraction of supposing a "state of nature" to begin a science of politics? Did the "state of nature" exist historically?

PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: John Goheen and Jon Reider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>3:15</td>
<td>Plenary Session -- John Goheen and Jon Reider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7:00</td>
<td>Plenary Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>3:15</td>
<td>Discussion Sections</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>3:15</td>
<td>Discussion Sections</td>
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REQUIRED READING:

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

I. How does Hobbes contrast himself with traditional thought? Why does he attack "essences?"

Why does Hobbes discuss power in the way that he does? Why is power equated to so many different things?

III. Why does he assume that men are at war with each other in the state of nature? How can he claim that his is a scientific proposition? Is the state of nature a bad thing?

IV. How does a "covenant" establish justice? What, specifically, is just about the Leviathan? Is the Leviathan a total state? Is there any freedom in it?

V. What kind of sovereign does Hobbes think is desirable? Is he a monarchist? Could his ideas support any other system of government? What aspect of his ideas might have filtered down to influence our own theories of government?

VI. What is Hobbes' innovation in the classification of states? How does this fit into his general theory of politics? How would he argue against Aristotle?

VII. What does Hobbes think leads to the dissolution of states? Does he recognize a right of rebellion? Can such a right be deduced from his theories?

VIII. Do Machiavelli and Hobbes share any common assumptions about human nature? Is one more scientific than another? What is the difference in their method?

How does Hobbes reflect the growing influence of scientific modes of reasoning? Can he reconcile Christianity and the Leviathan? Does the Leviathan need a religion?
WEEK X: 8 to 12 March

**TOPIC:** The Reaction Against Rationalism

**TOPIC QUESTIONS:**

I. What is a natural law? How can we tell if it exists? Can it be discovered scientifically? How does it differ from man-made laws, like written constitutions, and from laws of nature?

II. Is it really possible to conceive of a human nature that is pre-social? What usefulness does this idea have?

Is inequality a "natural" characteristic of man? Does equality of political rights depend on approximate equality of social position? Is it worth trying to make men equal? What makes equality morally good in our culture? Do you agree that it is good?

How important is the acquisitive drive for man? Is property the root of all evil? Is there a proper amount of property a man should have, but no more? Is it right for a government to try to control this?

V. How do you identify what is best for a society? Is majority rule the best way? Does society as a whole have a common interest, or is it just a collection of individual interests?

**PLENARY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS:**

**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Jon Reider

Mon 5:00 Papers Due

Tue 3:15 Plenary Session -- Jon Reider

Wed 3:15 Discussion Sections

Thu 3:15 Discussion Sections

**REQUIRED READING:**

Rousseau, Second Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality, in *The Essential Rousseau.*

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS:

I. How is Rousseau's Discourse a critique of earlier utopian thinkers, such as Plato and Thomas More? Does Rousseau think it is possible to reform his society? Does he have an idea of an ideal society?

II. Is Rousseau reacting against the rationalism of Hobbes, Descartes, and Newton? What would he replace it with? Does he reject reason altogether? What are the best elements of his position? What dangers might it have? Is it fair to call Rousseau a "romantic?"

III. Is Rousseau interested in analyzing a particular form of government like a monarchy or a republic? How does his social contract differ from Hobbes'? Do you think his approach is more valid historically, i.e., that men started out in something close to his notion of the state of nature?

IV. What is the general will? How does it differ from the will of the majority? From the will of each individual added up? From the general welfare? How is it determined? What can a man do if he disagrees with the general will?

V. What does Rousseau mean by "freedom?" How does this differ from earlier definitions of freedom you have read? Can freedom and equality be reconciled? What would Rousseau think of "doing your own thing?"

VI. Could Rousseau's ideas be used to justify a totalitarian government, which claimed to act on the behalf of the "general will?" Could reading Rousseau lead one to become a revolutionary? Would either of these readings be fair to him?